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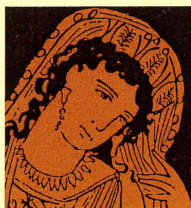
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HEIDEGGER'S ANAXIMANDER:
TO ΧΡΕΩΝ AND THE HISTORY OF BEING



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HEIDEGGER'S ANAXIMANDER: TO XPEΩN AND THE HISTORY OF BEING

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«IN EVERY WORD THE SAYING [OF ANAXIMANDER]
SPEAKS OF BEING AND ONLY OF BEING; IT DOES THAT
EVEN, WHERE IT SPECIFICALLY REFERS TO BEINGS.»¹

In his lecture course on Parmenides, Heidegger calls Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus primordial thinkers (*anfängliche Denker*).² He makes a distinction between early thinkers and primordial thinkers. Not every early Greek thinker is a primordial thinker for him. The primordial thinker is one who thinks the beginning (*Anfang*), and for Heidegger the beginning is being (*Sein*). Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus are primordial thinkers, Heidegger says, not just because they initiate Western thought (there were also other thinkers at that time who did so), but because they think the beginning.

The reason why Heidegger pays so much attention to Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus in his works is thus clear. They stir his interest because they are the only Presocratic thinkers whom he considers primordial, who think the beginning which is being. But what does it mean to think the beginning? We know the reasons why Heidegger wishes to undertake his study of the Presocratics. He attempts to bring our thinking back to being and to the possibilities for being that are offered by the Presocratic thought. This is consistent with his view of history and philosophy.³ Still, what does he mean by saying that the Presocratic thinkers think the beginning? Why is the beginning being? What can we learn from the Heideggerian interpretation of the Presocratics?

¹ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Grundbegriffe*, GA51 [Hereafter "Gesamtausgabe" is cited as GA.] (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1981), p. 123. All translations of Heidegger from German editions are my own. However, I sometimes follow closely the English translations of him which are available.

² Martin HEIDEGGER, *Parmenides*, GA54 (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1982), p. 10. *Parmenides*, tr. by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 7.

³ See my article, "Heidegger, the Presocratics, and the History of Being", in *Existentia—An International Journal of Philosophy* XI (2001), pp. 491-502.

In this paper I attempt to answer these questions by examining Heidegger's readings of the Anaximander fragment. His commentary on this oldest recorded philosophical text of the West is best known from his essay "The Anaximander Fragment" (*Der Spruch des Anaximander*), written in 1946 and first published in *Holzwege* in 1950. However, Heidegger also discussed the Anaximander fragment in his lectures, first in 1926 and then in 1941.⁴ I take into consideration all these sources. I show that if the 1926 lecture still largely depends on traditional Presocratic scholarship, his 1941 lecture and 1946 essay are a radical departure from it. Further, I argue that for its right comprehension the later Heidegger's interpretation of Anaximander has to be placed in the wider context of his original philosophy of history—the history of being.

I. HEIDEGGER'S 1926 LECTURE ON ANAXIMANDER

We may be surprised when we study Heidegger's preparatory notes to his lecture on Anaximander given in the Summer Semester of 1926 as a part of the lecture course entitled "Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy."⁵ *Being and Time* was published in 1927. In 1926 Heidegger was still working on his fundamental work, but at that time he had already developed the basic conceptual framework of his philosophy, so different from the preceding philosophical tradition. And yet, the interpretation of Anaximander which he gives in his Anaximander lecture resembles traditional Presocratic scholarship. One of Heidegger's students took the following notes from the lecture.

Anaximander is the real philosophical thinker among the Milesian natural philosophers (born around 611 BC). Anaximander postulates ἄπειρον as ἀρχή. The following line of thought is important here: Beings (*das Seiende*) move in continuous interchange and opposition. There must be a being that lies at the basis, which makes this interchange possible and is in a sense inexhaustible, a being which guarantees ever new opposites in both spatial and temporal dimensions. Then it must lie before all opposites and cannot be a determinate being like water (of Thales). 1. The ἀρχή must be something which is not determined in the sense of opposing anything; it must be indeterminate. 2. But it must also lie beyond all opposites and be inexhaustible. In *Physics* (Γ 4, 203 b 18) Aristotle gives reason for postulating the ἄπειρον: "Only if there is an infinite and indeterminate source of becoming, is it guaranteed that coming-into-being and passing away will not end."⁶

Heidegger's reading of Anaximander from 1926 relies heavily on Aristotle and Burnet. In his book on *Early Greek Philosophy*, John Burnet gives Anaximander's reason for postulating ἄπειρον as ἀρχή and as a reference quotes exactly the same

⁴ Heidegger presented his interpretations of Anaximander in the following published texts.

"Der Spruch des Anaximander", in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1950); "The Anaximander Fragment," tr. by D. F. Krell and F. A. Capuzzi, in *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975)

Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie [lecture course from the Summer Semester of 1926], GA22 (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1993), pp. 53-54.

Grundbegriffe [lecture course from the Summer Semester of 1941], GA51 (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1981); *Basic Concepts*, tr. by Gary E. Aylesworth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Also, he discussed Anaximander in his lectures entitled *Der Anfang der abendlandischen Philosophie*. Their publication is planned for GA35.

⁵ *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* [SS1926]

⁶ GA, p. 228.

little passage from Aristotle's *Physics*, which is cited by Heidegger.⁷ Heidegger had read Burnet's work in translation and refers to it in his essay on Anaximander.⁸ His 1926 interpretation can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, Heidegger distinguishes Anaximander from the other Milesians. He calls him a "philosophical thinker" („philosophische Denker") and says that Anaximander "shows a philosophical instinct by pushing his way out of determinate beings and looking for ἄπειρον."⁹ The Milesians looked for a unity behind the multiplicity of phenomena, Heidegger claims, but among them only Anaximander posited an indeterminate, boundless entity behind the phenomena. He rejected the idea that water or any other so-called element, a determinate being, can lie at their basis. Secondly, Heidegger notices that the reason for positing ἄπειρον was for Anaximander the notion of opposites. Again, this is in line with commonly accepted Presocratic scholarship and derives from the Aristotelian view of Anaximander.¹⁰ Anaximander started, so to say, from the conflict of opposites, such as warm—cold or dry—moist. If the world had evolved from a single substance, such as water or fire, there must have been an unlimited amount of the substance to make the whole world. But if one substance was unlimited, the other would have perished due to the conflict of opposites. Unlimited amounts of cold and moist water would quench all fire, for instance. Therefore, at the basis of all phenomena must be ἄπειρον, something unlimited in a quantitative sense (inexhaustible) and yet qualitatively indeterminate.¹¹ Thirdly, Heidegger points out that for Anaximander ἄπειρον, an infinite and indeterminate being, is the source of all determinate beings. Beings are in continuous interchange and opposition. By taking up a determined shape, they come into being out of the ἄπειρον.

Heidegger's preparatory notes for the 1926 lecture and notes taken during this lecture by his students are very sparse. We do not get a full interpretation of Anaximander from them. In addition to what has been outlined above, Heidegger speaks about the innumerable worlds and about Anaximander's doctrine of the origin of heavenly bodies. The order of topics discussed in his lecture resembles the order of Burnet's presentation of Anaximander. In his notes there are also a few references to Aristotle. At this stage I shall not critically examine Heidegger's interpretation. Some scholars have raised doubts as to whether Anaximander's ἄπειρον should mean infinite in the sense of inexhaustible.¹² This and other questions can be raised. What is important now, it is to say that there is very little originality in Heidegger's 1926 interpretation of Anaximander. The Presocratic thinkers do not yet acquire the impor-

⁷ In Ross translation this passage reads as follows: "... the perpetuity of generation and destruction can be maintained only if there is an infinite source to draw upon." W. D. ROSS, *Aristotle's Physics* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 363. Also, see John BURNET, *Early Greek Philosophy* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 57. The first edition of Burnet's book was published in 1892.

⁸ In „Der Spruch des Anaximander" Heidegger cites the German translation of Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* which was edited by Else Schenkl and published under the title *Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie* (Berlin: Teubner, 1913). See David Krell's footnote on page 29 in Martin HEIDEGGER, *Early Greek Thinking*.

⁹ GA, pp. 228-229.

¹⁰ For a similar interpretation see W. K. C. GUTHRIE, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1 "The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 81 and Edward HUSSEY, *The Presocratics* (London: Duckworth, 1993), pp. 23-24.

¹¹ See ARISTOTLE'S *Physics* (Γ5, 204b24); Burnet, pp. 53-58. Heidegger's interpretation of this problem differs from Burnet's. Burnet assumed that "apeiron" means spatially infinite and not qualitatively indeterminate.

¹² GUTHRIE, p. 84.

tance for him that he accorded them in his later works. The Heidegger of *Being and Time* is still more interested in Aristotle than in the Presocratics.¹³

However, two things should be noted. First, Heidegger describes ἄπειρον as a being. He says: ἄπειρον is “Not a sensuous determinate being, but a non-sensuous indeterminate one; nevertheless a being”.¹⁴ “*Seiendes*” (a being) is a term by which Heidegger refers not only to natural things, but to all “things”, including human beings and their artifacts. By using “*Seiendes*” to describe ἄπειρον, he actually escapes concepts such as substance (*Substanz*) or principle (*Prinzip*) by which ἄπειρον is usually described. Thus, although dependent upon Aristotle, in 1926 Heidegger already distances himself partially from the terminology which is heavily burdened with the heritage of the Aristotelian interpretation of Anaximander. Second, Heidegger’s notes on Anaximander start with a puzzling problem: “How can this which is primordial, which grounds all beings, be one of the beings?”¹⁵ Does Heidegger believe that this is the problem which Anaximander placed before himself? Or is this rather a Heideggerian expression of the ontological difference? Both questions can be answered affirmatively. The answer to the first question is that if that which grounds all beings is a being, it must be indeterminate and unlimited. The answer to the second question is that the problems of being (*Sein*) and of the ontological difference between being and beings are already raised in Heidegger’s lectures of 1926.¹⁶ That which grounds all beings is none of the determinate and limited beings.

II. THE DEPARTURE OF THE LONG-HIDDEN DESTINY OF BEING

From the Anaximander lecture of 1926 to the lecture of 1941 there is a big jump. Heidegger, so to say, leaps over a ditch (*Graben*).¹⁷ The ditch does not just signify the period of time that separates the two lectures. It is a wide and deep cleavage between early Greek and modern thought, which cannot be seen just as a chronological distance, but as an essential difference.¹⁸ Heidegger jumps from the conceptual framework of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*, which, he believes, is still expressed in the language of metaphysics, to the primordial, non-metaphysical thinking of the Presocratics. In the meantime he delivers the lecture “On the Essence of Truth” (1930), which was published in 1943, and gives a lecture course *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), published in 1953. Among other works of this period, these two are the strongest expression of Heidegger’s “turn.” The “turn” is not the abandoning of the question of the meaning of being—the leading question of *Being and Time*. Heidegger stresses the continuity of his thought. However, the question of the meaning of being is in his later works reformulated as the question of

¹³ In the Second Part of *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* (1926), in which Heidegger discusses the “most important Greek thinkers,” there are only one and a half pages devoted to Anaximander, four pages to Heraclitus, and fifteen pages to Parmenides. By contrast, Plato gets forty-nine pages and Aristotle forty-four pages. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s interests will soon change. In his later works Heidegger devotes his foremost attention to the Presocratics.

¹⁴ GA, p. 53: „Nicht sinnliches bestimmtes Seiendes, sondern unsinnliches Unbestimmtes, aber auch ein Seiendes”.

¹⁵ Ibid., „Wie kann das, was unsprünglich ist, allen Seienden zugrunde liegt, selbst eines von diesen Seienden sein?”

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷ „Der Spruch des Anaximander,” p. 303. Hereafter this work is cited as SA.

¹⁸ *Parmenides*, GA54, p. 2.

openness, i. e. of the truth, of being.¹⁹ Further, since the openness of being refers to the situation within history, the most important conception of the later Heidegger becomes the history of being. As the story goes, especially as described in his Nietzsche lectures, humankind, particularly the West, has gone astray toward a dead end: nihilism—the questionlessness of being. Since in his later works Heidegger devotes a considerable attention to the study of the Presocratics, his “turn” can then be seen as a jump backwards to the first Greek beginning of Western thought and civilization; a jump to recover the primordial thinking on being and to replace the dead end with a new beginning.²⁰

The themes introduced in the 1941 lecture are further developed in the 1946 essay “The Anaximander Fragment.” Both the lecture and the essay will be treated together here.²¹ Heidegger begins his reflection on Anaximander by raising the problem of translation.

Heidegger makes some points concerning translation in general. He says that a literal translation is not necessarily faithful. Also, he stresses that translation (*Übersetzung*) always involves an interpretation (*Auslegung*).²² What he wishes to establish is that common translations of Anaximander’s saying and of other Presocratic fragments have been based on a certain reading of the Presocratics that comes mainly from Aristotle. Platonic and Aristotelian representations and concepts, he asserts, still guide interpretations of early Greek thinkers. If we translate a Presocratic fragment literally and put in the place of Greek words their equivalents found in a lexicon, we do not pay enough attention to the fact that these equivalents are often pregnant with meanings that come from the later interpreters of the Presocratics. Therefore, Heidegger claims, only the Presocratics themselves can help us to translate their fragments. He postulates that we simply listen to, and eventually engage in a thoughtful dialogue with, that which is said in the fragments.²³ To that end our thinking must first cross-over (*über-setzen*) to what is said.²⁴ We must leap over the ditch that separates us from the early Greeks.

Although this is not explicitly stated by Heidegger, one can notice that he makes a distinction between two kinds of translations: *thoughtful translation*, by which we engage in a thoughtful dialogue with a Presocratic text, and *literal lexicon translation*, by which we adopt equivalents to Greek words from the stock of readily available knowledge which is in lexicon. Further, a literal translation is for him actually “thoughtless.” A good example of this comes from “Introduction to «What is Metaphysics?».” “When we translate εἶναι [literally] by the word ‘to be,’” Heidegger says, “translation appears linguistically correct. However, in fact we replace one

¹⁹ Martin HEIDEGGER, „Von Wesen der Wahrheit”, in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main, Klosterman, 1967), pp. 201.

²⁰ The word *der Graben* which I have translated as ditch is closely related to the word *das Grab*, grave. Indeed there is a certain playfulness and ambiguity with which this word is used. The idea of a “dead end” of the West and of standing at an edge of a grave is implied in the passage in “The Anaximander Fragment” where Heidegger speaks about leaping over a ditch (grave). Also, there is implied the Heideggerian idea of authentic temporality: the ‘going back’ to the possibilities that have been (the past) and their projection in the movement ‘coming towards’ (the future) which both take place in the present. We leap backwards to the Greeks first in order to jump forward. SA, p. 303.

²¹ If they will be essential in our further discussion, the differences between the 1941 lecture on Anaximander and the 1946 essay will be stated.

²² SA, p. 297; *Grundbegriffe*, p. 101. Hereafter this work is cited as GB.

²³ SA, pp. 302-303 and p. 307; GB, p. 100.

²⁴ SA, p. 303.

sound by another. We prove to ourselves that we ... neither think εἶναι in a Greek way nor have a clear corresponding understanding of the word 'to be'."²⁵ Hence, there is a deeper meaning to Heidegger's preoccupation with translation in both his 1941 lecture and 1946 essay than some philological or methodological study, or even a wish to distinguish himself from former interpreters of the Presocratics. In "The Anaximander Fragment" Heidegger refers to the three words τὰ ὄντα, ὄν and εἶναι, whose translation is essential for the right comprehension of the Greek thought.²⁶ The literal, lexicon translation of these words is "thoughtless." Those words are related and have something to do with being, but in the lexicon translation the question of being is precisely not raised. According to Heidegger's terminology, it is then ontical (*ontisch*). We do not cross-over in it to the domain of the experience of being out of which the Greeks say these words. Consequently, at a deeper level of Heidegger's ontology, the distinction between the thoughtful and the literal (thoughtless) translation corresponds to the distinction between the ontological and ontical.²⁷

A particular point which is raised by Heidegger in his discussion of translation in the 1941 lecture refers to the "attitude of superiority" towards Presocratic thought; i. e., considering it to be "primitive," in the sense of undeveloped.²⁸ His argument goes as follows. If a way of thinking were primitive or underdeveloped, it would have to be improved or replaced by some more developed way of thinking. However, Pre-socratic thought does not need to be improved, but *repeated*.²⁹ It is primordial and

²⁵ Martin HEIDEGGER, „Einleitung zu «Was ist Metaphysik?»" in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1967), p. 376. Also, see SA, pp. 308-309.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 308: "Perhaps great effort is expended in order to bring out what the Greeks truly represented to themselves in words like θεός, φύσις, ζωή, τύχη, χάρις, λόγος, φύσις, or words like ἰδέα, τέχνη, and ἐνέργεια. But we do not realize that these and similar labours get nowhere and come to nothing so long as they do not satisfactorily clarify the realm of all realms, ὄν and εἶναι in their Greek essence (*Wesen*)."

²⁷ "Ontological" and "ontical" are Heidegger's technical words. Ontological refers to being (*Sein*); whereas ontic to any way of dealing with beings (*Seiende*) in which the problem of being is not raised.

²⁸ GB, p. 100.

²⁹ "Repetition" („Wiederholung") is a word of everyday use. However, it is used by Heidegger as a technical, philosophical term which indispensable for grasping his concept of history from Being and Time and his later works.

A comparison can be drawn between Heidegger's "repetition" and Collingwood's "re-enactment of past experience." In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood argues that because the historian cannot know the past directly as an eyewitness nor rely uncritically on testimony, he must re-enact the past in his mind. Thus the historian brings back to actuality something that was formerly actual, be it a historical event or an earlier idea, so that he can fully understand it and present it to the contemporary reader. In contrast to Collingwood, by introducing his notion of repetition, Heidegger does not wish to engage in an analysis of the nature of the historian's craft. For him, repetition is not a procedure of reconstructing the past like Collingwood's reenactment. If it is, nevertheless, for him an enactment of a return to the past, it is so in the sense that the past is viewed by Heidegger as a resource of possibilities for our own being.

According to Heidegger, by an act of repetition we do not merely bring something that was formerly actual, so that it may occur again in the present. Repetition, as "going back to the possibilities of Dasein that have been there," is for the sake of Dasein's future, for the sake of Dasein's "coming towards" possibilities for its own being. "Repetition" is not reconstructing or reproducing the past, but it is more like a creative retrieval: a new beginning that draws on the possibility of the first beginning.

See R. G. COLLINGWOOD, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 282-283, and Martin HEIDEGGER, *Sein und Zeit* (7th ed. Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1953), pp. 385-386. Hereafter this work will be referred as SZ. *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978).

non-metaphysical thinking, the kind of thinking in which being is thought as being, in contrast to modern thinking in which the problem of being is forgotten. Further, Presocratic thought can truly be repeated only if the remaining fragments will not sound to us as some assertions of a long-gone past, but as something of vital importance for our life today. Only if we do not regard them as “primitive,” but hear what they really say to us, the fragments or sayings of the Presocratics can at last bring us to a new beginning or, more precisely, to “the departure of the long hidden destiny of being.”³⁰

One fundamental characteristic of being about which we learn in “The Anaximander Fragment” is its disclosing self-concealment. “As it discloses itself in beings, being withdraws.”³¹ Being, an ambiguous disclosive process, withdraws itself within its own disclosedness in beings and thus conceals its true nature. The event of disclosure of being, on the one hand, and of concealment, on the other, is called by Heidegger the destiny (*Geschick*) of being. In the movement from one destiny to another, from one self-concealing disclosure of being to another, from one epoch to another epoch, history unfolds.

Greek antiquity, Christendom, modernity, globalization, and what we understand by the West—we are thinking all these on the basis of a fundamental characteristic of being that it is more concealed in *Λήθη* than it is revealed in *Ἀλήθεια*.³²

For Heidegger, history in the original, philosophical sense is the happening (*Geschehen*) of existing Dasein. The essential world-history is possible only on the basis of Dasein’s happening and unfolds in the movement from one destiny of being to another.³³ What he actually suggests here is that our fate in the sense of human history depends upon our collective understanding of being. When he claims that a thoughtful translation of Presocratic fragments can bring us to “the *departure* of the until now hidden destiny of being,” he means that once those fragments are rightly translated and interpreted, we can gain a new understanding of the meaning of being, and this profound experience can bring about a new beginning: a new historical epoch or perhaps even a new civilization. “Do we stand in the twilight of the most monstrous transformation our planet has ever undergone...?”³⁴ Heidegger asks at the beginning of his Anaximander essay, and he ends the essay with a statement about a confused state of the world and a rescue which comes from thinking on being.

³⁰ SA, p. 301: „... zum Abschied des bislang verhüllten Geschickes des Seins.“

³¹ SA, p. 310: „Das Sein entzieht sich, indem es sich in das Seiende entbirgt.“

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 311.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 300.

III. APXH AS ORDERING VERFÜGUNG

Let us now take a first look at what comes about in Heidegger's interpretation of the Anaximander fragment. The fragment reads as follows:

... ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὖσι,
καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών·
διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας
κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.³⁵

There are a few preliminary remarks to be made at this point. Firstly, Heidegger notices that the fragment consists of two sentences. The second one starts with the "διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ". The word γὰρ which can be rendered "for," "then," or "namely" may suggest to us that there is a link between those two sentences. However, Heidegger warns us not to jump to quick conclusions concerning their relationship.³⁶ We need firstly to reflect upon each of them separately.

Secondly, in his 1941 lecture Heidegger discusses the whole fragment, but in the 1946 essay only the part of it which he considers to be the original saying of Anaximander: ... κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας.³⁷ Nevertheless, he does not think that the preceding part of the text should be simply excluded as inaccurate. In fact, as we shall see later, the interpretation of the first sentence which he gives in his lecture is consistent with what he says about ... κατὰ τὸ χρεών in his essay.

Thirdly, in Heidegger's view the first sentence is about being as such and the second about an experience of the being of beings. The fragment is thus about being and not about a being. Hence, one can see clearly the difference between Heidegger's view of Anaximander given in the 1926 lecture and his later view. In this lecture ἀπειρον is described as an indeterminate being. By contrast, in 1941 Heidegger says:

³⁵ Ibid., p. 296. The traditional source for the Anaximander fragment is a passage from Theophrastus' work entitled *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* (*Opinions of the Physicists*), which is cited by the Neoplatonist Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. Heidegger cites an abbreviated version of this fragment which is numbered B1 according to the standard edition by Diels (Hermann DIELS, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 7th ed., vol. I, Berlin: Weidmann, 1954). The fragment B1 of Anaximander by Diels begins with a short sentence "... ἀρχὴν ... εἴρηκε τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἀπειρον." This sentence is dropped by Heidegger. He refers to it separately in both his lecture and his essay, and calls it "a shorter saying of Anaximander" (GB, p. 107). For the sake of simplicity of presentation, I shall follow Heidegger's distinction between "The Anaximander Fragment" and "the shorter saying of Anaximander." In fact, the latter is not considered by some scholars to be an original saying of Anaximander.

³⁶ GB, p. 103.

³⁷ SA, p. 314: "[T]he entire sentence preceding the κατὰ τὸ χρεών is much more Aristotelian in structure and tone than archaic. The κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου at the end of the normally accepted text also betrays the same characteristic of lateness."

In "The Anaximander Fragment" Heidegger considers only the second and end part of the first sentence: "... κατὰ τὸ χρεών" as the genuine words of Anaximander. By no means he is an exception here. Burnet, Kirk and Vlastos have also challenged the originality of fragment B1. See J. BURNET, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 52; G. S. KIRK-J. E. RAVEN-M. SCHOFIELD, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 105-108; C. H. KAHN, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 166ff.

The ἀρχή relates to being (das *Sein*). Therefore, the ἄπειρον cannot be a being (*ein Seiendes*). Nevertheless, it is often so interpreted and understood as the unbounded being in the sense of a universal world-stuff.³⁸

The Anaximander fragment is not about a being or beings. The ἄπειρον is not an indeterminate or unlimited entity. Anaximander is not a primitive natural scientist who looks for the first cause of the universe in a being. For the later Heidegger, Anaximander is a primordial thinker who thinks being. Further, Heidegger believes that in every word the fragment of Anaximander speaks of being and only of being.³⁹ But how are we to understand that?

Let us begin with ἀρχή and the sentence which is called by Heidegger “a shorter saying of Anaximander.”⁴⁰ Theophrastus’ testimony preserved in Simplicius’ *Physics* maintains that Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian, the successor and pupil of Thales, said:

ἀρχὴν τε καὶ στοιχεῖον εἶρηκε τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον.

This can be rendered: “(He) said that the principle (ἀρχή) and element of existing things was the ἄπειρον.”⁴¹ However, in *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Hermann Diels abbreviates the sentence by removing “τε καὶ στοιχεῖον.”⁴² Diels regards the στοιχεῖον (element) as a later philosophical term and assumes that Anaximander only said: “ἀρχὴν εἶρηκε τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον” (He said that the ἀρχή of existing things was ἄπειρον.). Heidegger further abbreviates the line. He removes the word εἶρηκε (said) and changes the sentence to a direct speech. In his version the shorter saying which he attributes to Anaximander is as follows:

(ἢ) ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον.

»Die Verfügung für das jeweilig Anwesende ist die Verwehrung der Grenzen.«⁴³

Heidegger translates ἀρχή as *Verfügung* (ordering, disposal). He asks us not to translate ἀρχή as *Prinzip* (principle) and not merely to understand it in the Aristotelian sense of the first principle since this is a later meaning of the word.⁴⁴ This word itself is old, he says, and has a number of meanings.

First, ἀρχή is that from which something sets out, the beginning (*Anfang*), but it is not the outset (*Beginn*) which is immediately left behind.⁴⁵ The word “*Beginn*” (start, beginning) which I have translated here as “outset”, has in German more of a temporal connotation than the word “*Anfang*” (beginning, start). Still, the distinction between these words in colloquial German is very subtle. However, Heidegger clearly differentiates between them. In his usage, the word “*Beginn*” (outset) refers to the start of a process or course of events. In the course of events, the outset is left

³⁸ GB, p. 110.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 123.

⁴⁰ See note 33.

⁴¹ See Kirk–Raven–Schofield, pp. 106–107.

⁴² DIELS, p. 89.

⁴³ GB, p. 107.

⁴⁴ Ibid. A number of scholars including Cherniss and Guthrie claim that Aristotle interpreted earlier thought in the language of his own day and basically assumed that he knew what his predecessors wanted to say better than they did themselves. See Harold CHERNISS, “The Characteristics and Effects of Presocratic Philosophy”, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12 (1951), pp. 324–325; Guthrie, p. 43, and pp. 56–57.

⁴⁵ GB, p. 108.

behind like the starting-place of a race. Once a contest of speed between runners has started, the starting-place (outset) is left behind by them. In no sense does the outset influence the further course of events. By contrast, *Anfang* (beginning) makes the difference. If one of the runners gets some advantage already at the beginning of the race, this beginning may influence the course of events for the whole race. Thus, ἀρχή in the sense of *Anfang*, is not only that from which a course of events sets out (departure), but also that on the basis of which the course of events maintains its course; i. e., its character and purpose (governance). In addition, ἀρχή is also that which, like a good start in a race, predetermines in part the course of events. It opens up, so to say, a realm of possibilities (opening-realm).

Heidegger argues that the word ἀρχή can be thought of in these three ways: departure (*Ausgang*), governance (*Durchwaltung*), and realm (*Bereich*).⁴⁶ As the most suitable word to express these three meanings he chooses *Verfügung*, which is usually translated as order, decree, or disposal, but I shall translate as ordering, so that I can better capture the meaning which Heidegger gives to it. The running competition is not actually an example from Heidegger. However, I hope that it offers some initial illustration of the Heideggerian distinction between “*Anfang*” and “*Beginn*”, and his understanding of ἀρχή. We may notice that the dictionary meanings of the word ἀρχή include, among others, origin, dominance (command), and realm (sovereignty). Hence, the Heideggerian meanings of ἀρχή are not just invented.⁴⁷ Yet, Heidegger would say that even if the dictionary meanings were correct, they would still not say anything to us, as long as they were not understood.⁴⁸ This is why he engages in the exegesis of the word ἀρχή and as a result conceives it in the threefold unity of departure, governance, and realm.

IV. ORDERING AS TO AΠΕΙΡON

The word ἀρχή, in the sense of beginning (*Anfang*), has been translated as ordering (*Verfügung*) and has been conceived as departure (*Ausgang*), governance (*Durchwaltung*), and realm (*Bereich*). However, this is not merely an ontical interpretation of the word. Heidegger interprets ἀρχή ontologically; i. e. in relation to being. The ἀρχή of Anaximander’s saying (ἡ) ἀρχή τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον “concerns being and in fact so essentially that it as ἀρχή makes up precisely being itself”⁴⁹

For Heidegger, ἀρχή, the ordering, is being. As he himself admits, at first such an idea seems very strange and may be difficult to understand.

The ordering is being itself, and the ordering is the refusal of limit. The ordering is refusal.⁵⁰

In this obscure statement, Heidegger says that ἀρχή as ordering is being, but he also gives the essential characteristic of being, namely, the refusal of limit. What is essential to being as being is that it rejects or refuses any possible limit which may be imposed on it.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

⁴⁷ The *Greek-English Lexicon* of Henry George LIDDELL and Robert SCOTT (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1940) lists the following meanings of the word:

(1) beginning, origin; first principle; element; end (of a bondage, rope, sheet, etc.); branch (of a river); sum total; vital organs (of the body);

(2) first place or power; sovereignty; empire, realm, magistracy, office; command.

⁴⁸ As I have already noticed, Heidegger’s concept of translation is precisely against relying on a lexicon.

⁴⁹ GB, p. 110.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 111.

With this Heideggerian interpretation of Anaximander's shorter saying, we have suddenly arrived at the core of Heidegger's understanding of Presocratic primordial thinking. Heidegger believes that in Anaximander and in other primordial thinkers "immediately, as in a first leap, but only for a moment, being itself is thought."⁵¹ We may recall that in *Being and Time* Heidegger says that being is always being of a being.⁵² Before his "turn," he believes that being can only be grasped through the mediation of the analysis of Dasein, the meaning of whose existence he seeks before attempting to answer the question of the meaning of being in general. And yet, in the "brilliance of a lightning streak," the later Heidegger finds unmediated being in the remaining fragments of the Presocratics.⁵³ Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus are primordial (*anfängliche*) thinkers for him because they think the beginning (*Anfang*), and the beginning, ἀρχή as ordering, is being. Still, how should we understand the Heideggerian statement that the ordering (ἀρχή) is being? Further, how should we understand the statement that the ordering is the refusal of limit (*Verwehrung der Grenzen*)?

First, we must notice that in Anaximander's saying (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον, the word ἀρχή refers to τὰ ὄντα, the word which is usually translated as "existing things" or "beings." For Heidegger, τὰ ὄντα is the Greek word for the German substantive *das Seiende*, which means literally "that which is," but is often rendered into English as "beings," for it is also used in the collective sense of all that is or all beings.⁵⁴ Heidegger challenges the "standard" translation of τὰ ὄντα by "beings" (*das Seiende*). He does not say that it is incorrect, but asks whether this is a *thoughtful* translation.⁵⁵ He translates τὰ ὄντα by "das Anwesende" ("what is present" or "that-which-is-present") and argues that this translation is in line with the primordial Greek experience of that-which-is. "That-which-is, thinking in a Greek way, is that-which-is-present."⁵⁶ How does he understand the primordial Greek experience of that-which-is, of beings (τὰ ὄντα)?

In his lecture course from 1937-1938 on "Basic Questions of Philosophy," Heidegger gives a clear statement of what he believes to be the Greek experience of beings.

That-which-is as such impressed the Greeks as the constant, which stands in itself over and against that which falls and collapses. ... Beings (*das Seiende*), as the constant, understood in this way in opposition to change and decay, are therefore entirely what is present (*das Anwesende*), opposed to everything absent and all mere dissolution. ... The constant, what is present out of itself and formed in itself, unfolds out of itself and for itself its contour (*Umriss*) and its limit (*Grenze*) against all that which is merely floating away and limitless.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² SZ, p. 10.

⁵³ "The brilliance of a lightning streak" is Heidegger's metaphor which describes a direct and unmediated contact with being. The view of being is compared to lightning. See "Der Spruch des Anaximander", p. 312. In both Heidegger's lecture of 1941 and his 1946 essay we can find passages that show that the later Heidegger believes in the possibility of thinking being without the mediacy of beings. For example, he says: "But, in the Anaximander fragment what is spoken of is indeed being itself..." in *Grundbegriffe*, p. 111. See also his "Zeit und Sein", in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969), p. 2.

⁵⁴ See MACQUARRIE's note on "das Seiende", in *Being and Time*, p. 22, note 1.

⁵⁵ SA, p. 307.

⁵⁶ GB, p. 104: „Das Seiende ist – griechisch gedacht – das Anwesende.“

⁵⁷ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Grundfragen der Philosophie*, GA45 (Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), pp. 129-130; *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, tr. by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 112-113.

Hence, beings as the constant (*Ständige*) in opposition to all change, are for the Greeks what is present (*Anwesende*) in opposition to what is absent; they are what is formed (*Gestaltliche*) in opposition to the formless and what is limited in opposition to the limitless. In his 1946 essay, Heidegger adds that the Greek experience is ambiguous. For, on the one hand, what is present can mean what is presently present; on the other hand, it can mean what is present in general, both at the present time and not at the present time.⁵⁸ What is present can thus include what is absent, as long as it is present in unconcealment (*ἀλήθεια*). Thus it is the unconcealed in opposition to the concealed. The fundamental Greek experience of beings, Heidegger concludes, is thus what is present in presencing, its disclosure and self-showing. “The Greek experienced beings as what is present, as what is presently present and what is not presently present, presented in unconcealment.”⁵⁹

Having preliminarily clarified the Greek word τὰ ὄντα and its translation by *das Anwesende*, we can now better understand the Heideggerian interpretation of the shorter saying of Anaximander. He translates it: „*Die Verfügung für das jeweilig Anwesende ist die Verwehrung der Grenzen.*”⁶⁰ This can be rendered into English as: “The ordering of what is momentarily present (*das jeweilig Anwesende*) is the rejection of limit.” However, there is still a little word „*jeweilig*” (momentary) to be clarified. In the dictionary it is given as “particular,” “current,” and “relevant.” Nevertheless, we can notice that this adjective is derived from „*die Weile*” (while, moment, space of time). In his 1946 essay Heidegger writes it in the hyphenated form „*je-weilig*,” which Krell translates as “lingering awhile.”⁶¹ He also makes up the substantive which is not found in literary German „*das Je-weilige*,” translated by Krell as “what in each case lingers.” We can learn that “What is present is what lingers awhile.”⁶² How can we then make sense of this statement?

Τὰ ὄντα, what-is (beings), were experienced by the Greeks as what-is-present, in the sense of what presents itself in unconcealment, “what appears from out of itself, and in this self-showing manifests.”⁶³ Nevertheless, in both his 1941 lecture and his 1946 essay on Anaximander, Heidegger notices that there is a certain tension regarding beings. On the one hand, they present themselves as something constant. On the other hand, they are only momentarily or transitorily present. They come-into-being and then pass away. Thus, they are what in each case lingers, but lasts only awhile.

[A] being is not a being as something permanent (*Beständiges*), but as what is present in presencing that is not to be reduced to a mere presence (*Anwesenheit*).⁶⁴

For Heidegger, the Presocratic experience of the being of beings is the presencing of what is present.⁶⁵ By contrast to that which is claimed by some Heideggerian scholars, according to him, the fundamental meaning of the being of beings for the Greeks is

⁵⁸ SA, p. 320. The basic point which Heidegger makes here is that what is present does not have to be identified with what is at the present time.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 322.

⁶⁰ GB, p. 107. See also SA, p. 338, where Heidegger offers an alternative and more “traditional” translation of the saying.

⁶¹ SA, p. 327; “The Anaximander Fragment,” p. 41.

⁶² SA, p. 323; “The Anaximander Fragment,” p. 37.

⁶³ *Parmenides*, pp. 202-203.

⁶⁴ GB, p. 115. In his 1941 lecture course Heidegger refines, so to say, his earlier view of beings, which comes from the 1937-1938 lecture course on *Basic Questions of Philosophy*. In the letter the tension between the constant and the transitory character of beings has not been yet noticed.

⁶⁵ GB, p. 110: “[A]ll Greek thinkers have conceived and experienced the being of beings as the presencing of what is present.”

not presence (*Anwesenheit*), but presencing (*Anwesung, Anwesen*)—enduring in unconcealment, disclosing itself.⁶⁶ Presence implies permanence, but beings are not permanent, but only what is momentarily present. I shall translate “*jeweilig*” by “momentary”, “*das jeweilig Anwesende*” by “what is momentarily present”, and “*das Jeweilige*” by “what lasts awhile”.

Now, what is only momentarily and not permanently present has a limit. Heidegger says: “What is momentarily present, τὰ ἐόντα, is within a limit (πέρας)”⁶⁷ We can thus render Heidegger’s translation of the saying of Anaximander as follows.

(ἡ) ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον.

»Die Verfügung für das jeweilig Anwesende ist die Verwehrung der Grenzen.«

The ordering (ἀρχή) of what is momentarily present (τὰ ὄντα), and thus limited, is the rejection of limit (τὸ ἄπειρον).

Still, even if our translation is correct, the sentence does not say much. It has to be further elucidated. Why should the ordering of what is limited be itself unlimited, in the sense of the rejection of limit? What is the ordering? In what sense are beings what is momentarily present? What is this all about? Those are some basic questions which one can ask. I shall look for answers to these questions in Heidegger’s lecture of 1941 and begin again with ἀρχή, the ordering.

The ordering arranges what is present into the departure, governance, and realm. The ordering orders that which we have already called beings into being in which only and alone are ever beings.⁶⁸

The ordering cannot act on beings and change them also because everything that acts is already a being, but the ordering is being. So how does being let beings be?⁶⁹

“Ordering orders beings into being,” but it does not act on them, for it is not itself a being. Ordering (conceived as departure, governance, and realm) orders beings into what they actually are (what lasts awhile, what is limited). But it itself remains beyond any limit because it is not a being. Hence, by contrast to beings, which are always subject to a limitation, the ordering as being refuses any possible limit. It is unlimited. Remembering Heidegger’s remark that a literal translation is not always faithful, I can now retranslate the Heideggerian translation of the Anaximander saying again, so that it can be more clear.

»Die Verfügung für das jeweilig Anwesende ist die Verwehrung der Grenzen.«

Being, as the ordering of beings into what they actually are (what lasts awhile, what is limited, what presences itself as something) is unlimited in the sense that it refuses any possible limit, for it is not a being. (A limit to being would deprive it of its own essence as being).

⁶⁶ Some Heideggerian scholars have misunderstood Heidegger in this point. The experience of being as presence does indeed apply to Plato and Aristotle, for with them, according to Heidegger, philosophy-metaphysics begins. It certainly does not apply to Anaximander and other early Greek thinkers for whom the basic experience of being is presencing. See George Joseph SEIDEL, *Martin Heidegger and the Presocratics: An Introduction to His Thought* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 36, and Frederick A. OLAFSON, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 210.

⁶⁷ SA, p. 339: “*Das je-weilig Anwesende, τὰ ἐόντα, west in der Grenze (πέρας).*” In this sentence Heidegger uses an archaic form of τὰ ὄντα with the extra “e”.

⁶⁸ GB, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

Consequently, the Heideggerian statement that the ordering (*ἀρχή*) of beings is being means, firstly, that being “gives itself” to beings, endows them with being and thus provides them with the ground in which only and alone they are. There is no being which can be without being as its ground.⁷⁰ Secondly, when *being gives itself* to beings, it gives itself always in part. Being as the ordering actually hands out to beings a limit, a share of its being. No entity is unlimited in its being. It *is* always in some limited way. There are different ways of being which are handed down to beings, but none of them is without limit. By prescribing them a departure, governing their course, and opening up the realm of their possibilities, ordering prescribes the being of beings.⁷¹ Thirdly, by contrast to beings, which are both limited in their being and determinate as to their whatness, being is unlimited. It is not unlimited in the sense of some inexhaustible and infinite material resource for all finite beings.⁷² Being is not a being. It is unlimited in the sense that there is no limit to its manner of being. Being refuses any possible limit that may be imposed on its being. In contrast to things which can be in some limited way, being *is* (exists) in an unlimited way.

The above interpretation of Heidegger’s reading of the shorter saying of Anaximander is not easily accessible either from his lecture of 1941 or from his essay of 1946. Both texts are obscure and difficult. They do not offer much help for a well supported argument. Nevertheless, we will find confirmation of this interpretation as we go deeper into Heidegger’s text and look at his reading of the longer saying, the Anaximander fragment. One thing is clear: that for the later Heidegger, τὸ ἄπειρον is not a being, even an indeterminate and unlimited one. According to him, the saying of Anaximander (ἡ) ἀρχή τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον concerns being (*Sein*). Being is the beginning (*ἀρχή*, *Anfang*) in the sense of ordering all beings. In this sense, being grants beings a part of its being and hands out a limit. The saying is thus about the ordering of all things, beings as such and as a whole. This ordering is being. Its essence is τὸ ἄπειρον, the refusal of a limit. Being maintains its essence insofar as it refuses to become a being and does not fall prey to a limitation.

⁷⁰ In any epoch of the history of being, beings are grounded in being. However, Heidegger argues that for the Presocratics for whom being is not yet a being, being as the ground (*Grund*) appears as a groundless abyss (*Ab-ground*), the source of thought and wonder. Only later, in the philosophy-metaphysics being as the ground of beings becomes “solidified,” so to say, in a being, such as *ἰδέα* of Plato, *ἐνέργεια* of Aristotle, actualitas of medieval philosophy, objectivity of modern philosophy, or the Nietzschean will to power. The concept of being as ground will be further clarified in the section “Τὸ Χρεῶν and the History of Being.”

Heidegger speaks about being as ground (*Grund*) in his 1941 lecture on Anaximander. We can also find the concept of being as the ground of beings in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, *Parmenides*, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, and his other works.

⁷¹ In “The Anaximander Fragment” by the term “usage” (*Brauch*) Heidegger means the manner in which being itself is related to beings. I shall come back to this point in the next section. However, already now I wish to quote a short sentence which illustrates and supports it. SA, p. 339: “But usage, which by giving out order limits what is present, hands over limits”. Heidegger implies that being “gives itself” to beings only in part and thus prescribes to them a limit.

⁷² For later Heidegger τὸ ἄπειρον is neither some “unlimited stuff” nor a material thing, nor any other thing. We can already see how much his interpretation differs from the both traditional and contemporary Presocratic scholarship. For example, Barnes calls τὸ ἄπειρον “the original and originating mass of the universe”; Cherniss, “a boundless expanse of infinitely different ingredients, a mixture”; Guthrie, “an enormous mass surrounding the whole of our world”. They all give it a material sense of some stuff or a thing, and look into it as to the material cause of the universe. For Heidegger, if τὸ ἄπειρον is some cause at all, it is not in a material sense. Being, as that which orders beings into being, is τὸ ἄπειρον, the unlimited in its being. See: Jonathan BARNES, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 29; Cherniss, p. 324; Guthrie, p. 85.

V. THE EARLIEST NAME FOR BEING:
TO XPEΩN

There is not agreement between scholars on a single translation of the Anaximander fragment. If we compare translations by Burnet, Freeman, Kirk, Kahn, Hussey, and Barnes, they differ considerably from each other and mostly do not follow the Greek text closely. A more literal translation of the first sentence of the fragment would say:

But out of whose is the coming-to-be for those beings, also into [those] they come at their destruction, according to necessity.⁷³

Heidegger translates the sentence as follows:

But whence the coming-forth is for what is momentarily present, also into this (as the same) the going away comes forth, answering to the compelling need.⁷⁴

As Heidegger notices, the first sentence does not just speak about beings, in the sense of what is momentarily present, but about their being. However, what the sentence addresses are neither beings nor their being, but the origin of the being of beings.⁷⁵ It begins as follows:

... ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὓσι ...

»Von wohereaus aber der Hervorgang ist den jeweilig Anwesenden im Ganzen.«

“But from whence is the coming-forth is for what is momentarily present as a whole”.⁷⁶

What is put questionably at the beginning of the sentence is “from whence the coming-forth is” for all beings. The sentence is then, Heidegger claims, not about the origin of beings, but about the origin of their coming forth. It is about the source of their being.

What is the origin of the being of beings? What is *the same* from which exits the coming-forth and into which enters the going-away? In Heidegger’s view, Anaximander gives us a clear answer: κατὰ τὸ χρεών. “Coming-forth from the same and going-away into the same answer to the compelling need.”⁷⁷ The Greek word τὸ χρεών is usually translated as “necessity.” However, in his lecture of 1941, Heidegger translates it as “compelling need” (*nötigende Not*). A few years later, in his Anaximander essay, he translates the same word as “usage” (*Brauch*). What stands between

⁷³ The sentence begins in the plural “... ἐξ ὧν ...”. However, some philosophers, including Heidegger, translate it in the singular. Furthermore, Vlastos believes that the plural “is strange, for the reference is obviously to the Boundless”. G. VLASTOS, “Equality and Justice in the Early Greek Cosmogonies”, in *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, eds. D. J. Furley and R. E. Allen (London: Routledge, 1970), pp. 139-150. Quoted after Guthrie, p. 81, note 1. I cannot solve the problem of the plurality here. The point is that Heidegger’s translation of the beginning of the sentence in the singular is not contrary to a substantial part of the Presocratic scholarship.

⁷⁴ GB, p. 101.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 106. Heidegger says clearly that Anaximander does not speak about the origin of beings (or opposites) from some boundless mixture, but about the origin of the being of beings. He does not speak about a material cause of things.

⁷⁶ GB, p. 105.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 106.

these two translations? What does τὸ χρεών mean in Heidegger's interpretation of Anaximander?

According to Heidegger, the word τὸ χρεών, which ends the first sentence of the Anaximander fragment, does not mean some kind of need, compulsion, or necessity which would refer to the realm of beings. In a rather dubious etymology, he traces the word to χράω, which means "I get involved with something," "I reach for," but also "I hand over," "I let something belong to someone."⁷⁸ He argues that originally τὸ χρεών did not signify anything of constraint and of what "must be." In the context of the Anaximander fragment, τὸ χρεών indicates what is essential in the relationship between presencing and what is present; i. e., between being and beings.

Τὸ χρεών is thus the handing over of presencing; this handing over hands out presencing to what is present and thus keeps what is present as such in its hand; i. e., preserves in presencing.⁷⁹

Τὸ χρεών describes the origin of the being of beings from being. It is the ordering by which being (presencing) and a limit are granted (handed out) to beings (what is present) and thereby beings can be as they are; i. e., they can be "preserved" in their being. In the obscure passage which is quoted above, Heidegger speaks about τὸ χρεών as the ordering which refuses any limit. We can find a confirmation of this idea in the following passage.

But usage [τὸ χρεών], which by giving out order limits what is present, hands over limits. As τὸ χρεών, it is at the same time τὸ ἄπειρον, what is without limit; for it is there to send limits to whatever is momentarily present.⁸⁰

As it has already been noted, for Heidegger the Presocratic experience of the being of beings is the presencing of what is present. The relationship between presencing and what is present is the relationship of being to beings. In Heidegger's view, it had been called by Anaximander by the word τὸ χρεών and describes the origin of the being of beings from being. Τὸ χρεών does not denote the material cause of beings.⁸¹ It is not a substance. It is rather a cause in the specifically Heideggerian and ontological sense: the origin of the being of beings which is being. As ordering, τὸ χρεών denotes being itself. Heidegger looks for the right word to render τὸ χρεών in German, so that the relationship of being to beings and the uniqueness of being itself as ordering can be expressed in it.⁸² At last, in his 1946 essay, he translates τὸ χρεών by *der Brauch* (usage, custom, practice). He makes a translation which, as he admits himself, sounds strange and can easily be misinterpreted.

"Usage" (*Brauch*) should not be understood in its usual sense as a way in which we use things or conduct our affairs. Heidegger takes the infinitive *brauchen* "to need" back to what he believes to be its root-meaning: "to brook" (*bruchen*), and translates the German *bruchen* to mean "to enjoy" in the sense of "to be pleased with something

⁷⁸ SA, p. 336. Carol White claims that Heidegger's etymology is rather dubious. See Carol J. WHITE, "Heidegger and the Beginning of Metaphysics", in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* vol. 19, 1 (January 1988), p. 36.

⁷⁹ SA, p. 337.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 339.

⁸¹ Any reader who is new to Heidegger may assume that being literally creates beings or brings them into existence. But this is not what Heidegger means. What he says here can be clarified only in the context of the history of being. See the last section of the paper.

⁸² SA., pp. 337-338.

and so to have it in use.”⁸³ Nevertheless, Heidegger claims that it is only in a derivative sense that “to enjoy” refers to human pleasure or consumption. The basic meaning of usage as enjoyment is “letting what is present to present [itself] as what is present” or letting something be delivered into its own being (*Wesen*) and to be preserved as what is present (a being).⁸⁴ To put it simply, “to use” originally means “to let things be as they are.” Only if we let a hammer, for example, be what it is, can we make proper use of it. We can use the hammer as a weight, as a ballast, or even as a pillow if we lay our head on it. We can also make it a subject of our inquiry. However, the proper use of the hammer refers to the hammer as a hammer. To use the hammer properly we must let it be what it is. However, if we just let something be what it is or if we let something be delivered into its own essence (whatness), then we still understand “usage” in an ontical sense. The ontological sense of “usage” refers to a situation in which instead of letting something be what it is, we let it be *as* it is: i. e., we let something be delivered into its own being.⁸⁵ In the context of the Anaximander fragment, the word does not refer to the realm of beings, but to being.

In the translation of τὸ χρᾶν, usage is thought as what is essential in being itself... [U]sage describes now the manner in which being itself is as the relationship to what is present; the relationship which affects what is present as such deals with it: τὸ χρᾶν.⁸⁶

Usage, we learn above, signifies what is essential (*das Wesende*) in being. It describes being itself in its relation to beings.

Consequently, we may now ask what is essential in being, and particularly, what is essential in its relationship to beings. Heidegger answers the question as follows:

Usage hands what is present over to its presencing, i. e., to its lasting awhile. Usage grants to what is present a portion of its while.⁸⁷

What is essential in being describes being as such. Being, called by both the Heideggerian term “*Brauch*” and the Greek word τὸ χρᾶν, is then that which I have already partially observed in the preceding section on τὸ ἄπειρον. Being, so to say, gives itself to beings.⁸⁸ It is ἀρχή, the origin of their being, for it orders them into their own being and lets them be as they are. Further, as it grants them a share of its while, it limits them. It determines them as something that lasts only awhile. Further still, it never gives itself fully to beings, but always in part. “As it discloses itself in beings, being withdraws”.⁸⁹ In this sense it is τὸ ἄπειρον. It refuses all limits and remains itself

⁸³ Ibid., p. 338.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 338-339.

⁸⁵ The word „*das Wesen*,” which Heidegger uses in the description of “usage”, is usually translated by “essence” and understood as whatness (the nature or character of a thing). However, it is derived from „*wesen*”, the verb which is today obsolete, but which once would mean the same as „*sein*.” In the original sense „*das Wesen*” would then mean being or beingness. Heidegger often refers to this original, pre-conceptual sense; therefore, in this particular passage I translate „*das Wesen*” by “being.”

⁸⁶ SA, p. 339.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ For the „*Es gibt Sein*” (“Being gives itself”) see SZ, p. 212; „*Brief über den Humanismus*” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1967), pp. 336-337; „*Zeit und Sein*,” pp. 9-10.

⁸⁹ SA, p. 310. We can see that the phrase is ambiguous. On the one hand, it refers to the disclosing self-concealing of being. On the other hand, it refers to its giving character. Yet, that ambiguity is grounded in being itself, which in the disclosure in self-concealment reveals itself as ἀλήθεια and in its giving aspect as τὸ χρᾶν.

beyond any limit. It is *the same* from which the being of beings originates and into which it comes back.

Τὸ χρεών, Heidegger claims, is the earliest name for being (*das Sein*). In its different aspects, being can be described by “usage”, “ordering”, and the “refusal of limit.” We can now understand why Heidegger believes that in Anaximander, “being itself is thought.”⁹⁰ Still, we have not yet clarified why his translation of τὸ χρεών as “usage” from the 1946 essay differs from his translation of τὸ χρεών as “compelling need” from the 1941 lecture. Did Heidegger change his view of τὸ χρεών from 1941 to 1946, so as to translate it by different words?

The translation of τὸ χρεών by “compelling need” („nötigende Not”), which comes from Heidegger’s lecture, sounds much closer to the usual translation of this word by “necessity” („Notwendigkeit”) than the strange-sounding “usage” („Brauch”). However, if we read the text of the lecture carefully, we discover that the meaning of “compelling need” corresponds to the meaning which Heidegger gives later to the term “usage.” Like “usage,” “compelling need” describes the essence of being.

The compelling need, τὸ χρεών, contains the completed determination of the essence of ἀρχή. This means: the ordering as departure, dominance, and opening for coming-forth and going-away has the basic feature of the compelling need. This [compelling need] is in the manner of ἄπειρον as the resistance which resists any limitation of the final permanence. The compelling need as ordering in the manner of resisting all limits is the same out of which [comes] forth all what comes forth and back into which [goes] all what goes away, and in which as the same is (*wes*) the transition; and this is called genuine presencing, which does not fall prey to permanence.⁹¹

There are a number of points which are made in the passage above. The most important for us is that τὸ χρεών, which is translated here as “compelling need,” is compared with ἀρχή, the ordering. Being as ἀρχή orders beings into being. It lets beings be. It is the origin of their being. Hence, the compelling need as ordering describes the essence of being which is “letting things be as they are.” Further, as ἄπειρον being it is in the manner of resisting all limits. Although τὸ χρεών, ἀρχή, and ἄπειρον do not mean the same, they are the same. They are all names for being. Heidegger says this clearly in his 1941 lecture.

The same, the ordering; the same, τὸ ἄπειρον are τὸ χρεών, the need that compels.⁹²

To sum up, the 1941 translation of τὸ χρεών, “compelling need,” says the same as the 1946 translation “usage.” They both describe being as such. The “compelling need” expresses the essential need of being to give itself. In this sense, being as ἀρχή, the ordering which orders beings into being, is in its essence the compelling need. On the other hand, beings are because of the compelling need, which is being. It is the same out of which comes forth what comes forth and back into which goes what goes away. Hence, there is a certain playfulness in the word “compelling need” („nötigende Not”) on which Heidegger plays. Like “usage” it refers to the need of being to let beings be; but it refers also to the need of beings to be. Consequently, the term “compelling need” has a wider meaning than the term “usage” as a translation of τὸ χρεών. It does not only describe being in its essence, but also beings in their being. The difference between these terms comes from the fact that in the 1941 lecture, Heidegger

⁹⁰ GB, p. 111.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 117.

⁹² Ibid., p. 116.

discusses the whole fragment of Anaximander, whereas in the 1946 lecture he cuts out the first sentence from which he leaves only the words “τὸ χρεών.”

The first sentence of the Anaximander fragment is about being itself as the same in whose ordering there is each being.⁹³ The essence of being, the earliest name for which is the Greek word τὸ χρεών, is “letting beings be.” Further, τὸ χρεών, ἀρχή, and ἀπειρον are for Heidegger the same. In the context of Heidegger’s reading of Anaximander, they all describe being as such in its different aspects.

VI. THE BEING OF BEINGS: GETTING OVER DISORDER

In Heidegger’s view, the second sentence of the Anaximander fragment speaks about beings, or more precisely, it speaks about what-is-present in its totality. The word αὐτά (they), which is the subject of this sentence, refers to τοῖς οὓσι (for those beings) of the first sentence. Hence, it refers to everything present; that is, to all that which lasts awhile.⁹⁴ How does Anaximander experience the totality of what is present?—Heidegger asks. What is his experience of all beings? The answer is ἀδικία (injustice). The sentence reads:

διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας

And it is usually translated:

[F]or they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice...⁹⁵

But what has injustice, an apparently moral term, to do with what-is as a whole? Heidegger rejects the interpretation that associates Anaximander with some “primitive” world view, according to which natural phenomena would be interpreted anthropomorphically.⁹⁶ He looks for an ontological interpretation of the saying of Anaximander.

To avoid moral or juridical associations of the word injustice, Heidegger translates ἀδικία by the German word „Unfug.” This translation is an example of the Heideggerian sense of humor. In the colloquial German, „der Unfug” means “mischief,” “nonsense,” or “rubbish.” And yet, in a more formal sense it denotes “a conscious disruption of public order, or something that is not right.” Further, it is close in meaning to „Unwesen” (nonsense, public nuisance), which is formally the denial of the word „Wesen” (essence, being, beingness), one of the most important words in the Heideggerian ontology. Thus, to express the more formal meaning of the word „Unfug”, I shall translate it by “disorder.”⁹⁷ Then, I shall render „Unwesen” by “nonessence” or “deprivation of essence.” Finally, I shall translate the word „Fug,” which like „Unfug” is used by Heidegger, but is today formally obsolete, by the word “order.” The Heideggerian translation of the second sentence then reads:

⁹³ Ibid., p. 117.

⁹⁴ SA, p. 326.

⁹⁵ Kirk–Raven–Schofield, p. 108.

⁹⁶ SA, pp. 306 and 327.

⁹⁷ Also Krell translates „Unfug” by “disorder”. See “The Anaximander Fragment”, p. 43. The sentence: „Ἀδικία, die Un-fuge, ist der Un-Fug” (SA, p. 329) is translated: “Ἀδικία, disjunction, is Disorder”.

[G]ehören lassen sie Fug somit auch Ruch eines dem anderen (im Verwinden) des Un-Fugs.⁹⁸

This can be translated into English as follows:

For they [beings] let order belong, and thereby also respect, to one another (in getting over) of disorder.

Whenever injustice prevails, Heidegger says, then “there is something not right with things. This means, something is out of joint.”⁹⁹ He plays here on two words, *„die Fuge“* and *„der Fug“*, which sound very similar, but have quite different meanings. *„Die Fuge“* means joint; *„der Fug“* means order.¹⁰⁰ He wishes to show that the situation of injustice, which he describes by the idiom “something is out of joint,” corresponds to the state of disorder.¹⁰¹ Still, even if we can draw a parallel between injustice and disorder, what do order and disorder mean in the Anaximander fragment?

Disorder belongs to what is momentarily present. This means: not submitting to the ordering. Only insofar as what is present presences, it is available and satisfies the ordering.¹⁰²

As we have already learned, being is the beginning: the origin of the being of beings. It is the ordering, for it orders beings into being, grants them a limit, and thus prescribes them their while. Since being is the ordering, the order belongs to those beings that submit to it. The order is τὸ χρεών.¹⁰³ And yet, disorder also belongs to beings, insofar as they do not answer to the ordering. Is it at all possible not to respond to the ordering, to τὸ χρεών, the compelling need or usage which were discussed in the last section? Well, the second sentence says that whatever is present responds to the ordering, for disorder is (always) got over. Nevertheless, there is at least some drive

⁹⁸ SA, p. 333. The above translation comes from the 1946 essay. The translation given in the 1941 lecture is different and goes as follows: „[E]s gibt nämlich jedes Anwesende selbst (von sich aus) Fug, und auch Schätzung (Anerkennung) läßt eines dem anderen, (all dies) aus dem Verwindung des Unfugs...“ (GB, p. 94).

In my translation it runs: “For each what is present (from itself) lets order and also value (recognition) belong to one another; (all this) out of the getting over of disorder...”

Although the translations seem to be quite different from each other, the difference is rather in wording than in the actual sense. Heidegger’s essay and his lecture say the same thing, even if some words and translations differ.

⁹⁹ SA, p. 327.

¹⁰⁰ Karin De Boer neglects, as she calls it, “Heidegger’s nuanced use of and play with the German meanings of the terms *Fug*, *Fuge* and *Unfug*,” which as she claims cannot be really rendered in English. Yet, she renders *Fug* and *Unfug* as “joint” and “out-of-joint” respectively which I believe is a mistranslation of these terms. See Karin DE BOER, “Giving Due: Heidegger’s Interpretation of the Anaximander Fragment,” in *Research in Phenomenology*, 31 (1997), p. 156, n. 6. By contrast, I distinguish the terms *„die Fuge“* (“joint”), *„aus dem Fugen“* (“out-of-joint”), *„der Fug“* (“order”), and *„der Unfug“* (“disorder”) from one another, and I believe that the “nuanced,” playful use of these terms should be considered for a correct interpretation of the Anaximander fragment.

¹⁰¹ “The time is out of joint”—line 188 in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*—basically means that everything is in a mess and the world is in a disorderly state. Now, whether we can equate injustice with disorder is at least questionable.

¹⁰² GB, p. 118.

¹⁰³ SA, p. 335.

or tendency on the part of beings to run into disorder which makes Anaximander experience them as ἀδικία. How does Heidegger understand that experience?

Let us recall that according to Heidegger the early Greeks experienced the being of beings as the presencing of what is present. A being is something that stands in itself over and against change and shows itself up in unconcealment as something constant. Further, the constant has in Heidegger's view a certain relationship and drive to permanence (*Beständigkeit*). "Is a being not more a being, the more constant and lasting it is?"¹⁰⁴ he asks in a rhetorical way. In fact, the drive to permanence has for him a deeper ground than some common-sense view of what beings are, which is presented in the question. This drive corresponds to the essence of presencing.¹⁰⁵ Hence, there is a tension concerning beings in reference to their being: the tension between permanence and transition as their coming forth and going away. This tension finds its expression in the second sentence of the Anaximander fragment. The sentence speaks about beings, but what it expresses is the way in which beings are as beings.¹⁰⁶

As long as beings answer to the ordering of being, they submit to the order (δίκη). They submit to the order insofar as they are in transition. Presencing, the being of beings, is incompatible with permanence (*Beständigkeit*).

The permanence brings into presencing the deprivation of its essence and takes from it the possibility of that which belongs to presencing as coming-forth and rising, namely, to go back and to go away.¹⁰⁷

We can see that in this passage Heidegger clearly associates presencing (the being of beings) with transition as coming-forth and going-away. Permanence would settle presencing into a final presence and thus set a permanent limit to the being of beings. This way it would deprive being of the way it is, namely, the unlimited. On the other hand, insofar as beings last awhile and endure in unconcealment, as something constant, they have a drive to permanence and run into disorder (ἀδικία).

[T]he thoughtlessly uttered "injustice of things" has been clarified by thinking the essence of what is momentarily present as the disjoint in lingering. The disjoint consists in the fact that whatever lasts awhile seeks to win for itself the while in the sense of the more permanent. ... Permanence asserts itself in presencing as such, which lets whatever is present linger awhile in the area of unconcealment.¹⁰⁸

What is present lasts (lingers) awhile. Beings are insofar as they present themselves between their approach (coming-forth) and withdrawal (going-away). This between is called by Heidegger the joint.¹⁰⁹ This is the joint of their transition. However, when beings do not take their while as transitory, but wish to win for themselves a while which would be everlasting, then they come "out of joint." Their drive is from transition to permanency and sheer endurance. Heidegger points out that the seed of such a drive lies in presencing itself, in the being of beings as such. It lies in their being constant and enduring, in the while which is prescribed to them by being.

Beings can be beings only as what is present in transition and not as something permanent.¹¹⁰ If they turned into something permanent and everlasting, neither would they be beings, nor would they let other beings be. Heidegger says:

¹⁰⁴ GB, p. 113.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 113-114.

¹⁰⁸ SA, p. 328.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 327.

¹¹⁰ GB, p. 115.

When those which last awhile delay, they stubbornly follow the inclination to persist in hanging on, and indeed insist on persisting. They aim at a permanent endurance and no longer pay attention to δίκη, the order of the while. But in this way each of them turns against every other. None pays attention to the lingering being of others.¹¹¹

One can notice that the drive toward permanence corresponds to a situation when beings no longer submit to the order, but also no longer pay attention to or respect other beings. The second sentence of the Anaximander fragment speaks, in Heidegger's view, about those two features: order (δίκη) and respect (τίσις). The first describes the relationship of beings to being; the second—the relationship of beings to each other. Τίσις is usually translated by “penalty” („Buße”), but Heidegger claims that the original meaning of this word is “assessment” or “consideration.”¹¹² For him, τίσις means an assessment of something or giving something a proper due. He translates this word by „Ruch” (“reck, respect”).¹¹³ Further, according to him the two features of beings, order and respect, are interrelated.

Insofar as those which last awhile give order, each of them lets respect prevail over its relations with others, διδόναι ... καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας.¹¹⁴

We can see that if a being submits to the order of being, it gives respect to other beings or lets other beings be. On the contrary, if it does not submit to the order and aims at permanent endurance, it, so to say, tries to exclude other beings from being. In a disorderly state every being turns against each other. Consequently, in order to be, beings need to respond to the ordering of being and submit to its order. Letting the order belong and giving respect is, as Heidegger says, the sole manner in which those which last awhile as what is present last at all.¹¹⁵ Order and respect are two essential features of beings. Only because of them do beings get over disorder.

Ἀδικία, disorder, is only a part of Anaximander's experience of beings, for it is got over. In his 1941 lecture Heidegger distinguishes between two terms „Überwindung” (“overcoming”) and „Verwindung” (“getting over”).¹¹⁶ Disorder is not overcome, for it would mean that it can be extinguished or conquered. But it is neither extinguishable nor escapable. It can only be got over or come through. By using the term „Verwindung”, Heidegger wishes to point out the tension between *Fug* (order) and *Unfug* (disorder), which is essential to Anaximander's experience.

Getting over disorder belongs to the essence of what is momentarily present as such, for what is present as such gives itself in to transition.¹¹⁷

The basic experience of all beings by Anaximander is, according to Heidegger, getting-over disorder. This is accomplished when beings submit to the order of being. Only when they let the order belong, beings give in or yield to transition, and conse-

¹¹¹ SA, p. 331.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 330-331.

¹¹³ In his 1941 lecture Heidegger translates τίσις by estimation (*Schätzung*) and recognition (*Anerkennung*). Yet, the basic sense of these words in the second sentence of the Anaximander fragment remains the same as that of respect (*Ruch*). If a being submits to the order of being, it allows value, gives recognition, pays attention, and gives respect to other beings; it lets other beings be.

¹¹⁴ SA, p. 332.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 333.

¹¹⁶ GB, pp. 119-120.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

quently give respect to each other, for they no longer aim at everlasting presence. Getting-over disorder is thus essential to what is present as such, to all beings, for without this they would not be beings.

VII. TO ΧΡΕΩΝ AND THE HISTORY OF BEING

We have already learned that, in Heidegger's view, the destiny of being corresponds to a certain understanding of being which people in general share. Understanding cannot be, however, taken in just a theoretical sense, but has a practical meaning as the projecting of one's being upon possibilities for existence.¹¹⁸ When we project our own being upon different possibilities, we comport ourselves positively toward actual beings.¹¹⁹ Hence, upon our collective understanding of being depends all our comportment to beings; and our fate, so to say, depends upon the comportment. The destiny of being reflects our own human fate as of a human race or a civilization; and vice versa, our own fate is a reflection of the destiny of being. This relationship between understanding, destiny of being, and human fate is expressed in the bold Heideggerian statement:

We might assert in an exaggerated way, which nevertheless bears on the truth, that the fate of the West depends on the translation of the word εἶναι, assuming that the translation consists in crossing over (*Über-setzung*) to the truth of what comes to language in εἶναι.¹²⁰

Heidegger claims that our destiny, the fate of the West, depends upon whether or not we can "cross-over" to that meaning of being that the Greeks once shared and which can reveal itself in the archaic word εἶναι.¹²¹ Once we understand the forgotten meaning of being, this should transform our lives because understanding is not a mere intellectual experience, but is related to the whole of human existence.

Western humankind has gone astray towards a dead end which is characterized by a "triumph of the manipulative arrangement of a scientific-technological world, and the social order proper to this world."¹²² Modernity ends with the complete predomination of science as manifested in modern technology and its expansion all over the world. This is for Heidegger the result of the forgetfulness of being. The fundamental question which he asks in *Being and Time* is the question of the meaning of being, which is in his later works reformulated as the question concerning the truth (openness) of being. The answer to the latter question is provided in his original philosophy of history: the history of being which unfolds in so many works of the later period. "The Anaximander Fragment" is a classic example of a later work. In this essay we can find both the style of writing and all the main issues that are very characteristic of the later Heidegger. To understand well this forty-eight page long, obscure and unsystematic piece, means to get a clue to the Heideggerian work after *Being and Time*. What is he up to in "The Anaximander Fragment"? In this section, I shall provide a synthetic overview of the philosophy of history, which I believe lies at the core of the 1946 essay.

¹¹⁸ SZ, p. 148: "As understanding, Dasein projects its being upon possibilities."

¹¹⁹ BPP, pp. 10-11, p. 223.

¹²⁰ SA, p. 318.

¹²¹ In the Aeolian and Aeolian dialects τὸ εἶναι and τὰ εἶναι appear as τὸ εἶναι and τὰ εἶναι. Homer, Heraclitus, and Parmenides still employ the archaic form of εἶναι, which is εἶναι.

¹²² EP, p. 65.

“Every epoch of world history is an epoch of errancy”¹²³, Heidegger claims. “The beginning of the epoch of being lies in what we call “Greek” thought epochally. The beginning... is the dawn of the destiny of being from being”.¹²⁴ Thus, the history of being begins in ancient Greece. It originates in the thought of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, who are called the primordial thinkers for they first think being. However, with Plato and Aristotle a falling away from the original early Greek experience of being occurs. This fateful event is followed by a gradual slipping away of the difference between being and beings and the ever-greater forgetfulness of being. This forgetfulness is not just a failure of human thinking, but refers to the self-veiling essential to being itself. “As it discloses itself in beings, being withdraws.”¹²⁵ Being withdraws itself within its own gift: disclosedness in beings. In the movement from one self-concealing disclosure of being to another, from one epoch to another epoch, the history of being unfolds. The ever-greater forgetfulness of being is thus a multiple, epochal “errancy” and not a continuous, sequential process.¹²⁶ There are the great Greek epoch of being, of which the Presocratics are the beginning and Aristotle the end, Christendom, and modernity. Called variously by different philosophers, being is reduced to a being: to ἰδέα in Plato, ἐνέργεια in Aristotle, *substantia* and *actualitas* in Medieval philosophy, objectivity in Descartes and modern philosophy, and will to power in Nietzsche and contemporary thought. The forgetfulness of being develops gradually throughout the history of the West, so as to bring Western civilization to an edge of a grave and an abyss of confusion. “Is there any rescue? Rescue comes when and only when danger is. Danger is when being itself advances to its farthest extreme and when the oblivion that issues from being undergoes a reversal.”¹²⁷

In Anaximander, as in the two other Presocratics (Heraclitus and Parmenides) whom Heidegger considers primordial thinkers, being itself is thought. It reveals itself to him as τὸ χρεών. “What is present presences τὸ χρεών. ...”¹²⁸ But how can he think of and have a direct insight into being? To think being, Heidegger believes, does not require the display of an exceptional state of mind. ‘All is needed is ... an awakening that all of a sudden sees that what-is “is”’.¹²⁹ This awakening is a part of the Presocratic experience. As Heidegger already says in *Being and Time*, openness to being is characteristic of human existence.¹³⁰ Yet this openness can be covered up. The primordial Greek thinkers can have a direct insight into being because they think of and are open to being. Their attitude towards being is characterized by wonder.¹³¹ This basic Greek attitude of openness towards being can be expressed by the phrase

¹²³ SA, p. 311.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 312.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 310.

¹²⁶ See Françoise DASTUR, “Heidegger on Anaximander: Being and Justice,” in *Interrogating the Tradition: Hermeneutics and the History of Philosophy*, eds. Charles E. Scott and John Sallis (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), p. 182.

¹²⁷ SA, p. 343.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 340.

¹²⁹ *Parmenides*, GA54, p. 222.

¹³⁰ SZ, p. 12. It is peculiar to Dasein “that with and through its being, this being is disclosed to it. Understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s being. ... Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself.”

¹³¹ Heidegger speaks of wonder as the attitude of the Greeks in “What is Philosophy?” and *Basic Questions of Philosophy*. In the latter work, the essence of wonder has been described as “the basic disposition compelling us into necessity of primordial thinking” (GP, p. 165). Wonder (*Erstaunen*, *θαυμάζειν*) is thus for Heidegger the basic disposition which lets us to be open to and think about being.

“letting things be as they are,” by which the word τὸ χρεών has been described. The early Greeks do not “objectify” beings. They do not reduce them either as an object of assertion or an object for a thinking subject. But they let them be as they are, as self-showing rising into unconcealment. They experience them in their phenomenality: what is present in presencing. In contrast, the philosophy-metaphysics which begins with Plato and Aristotle, departs from the early Greek unmediated experience of beings in unconcealment. The pure beholding of what is present and attempt to let it hold sway in its radiance and disclosure is replaced by metaphysical thinking whereby beings are represented in terms of their ground. In Plato the ground becomes the ἰδέα to which beings relate by the way of participation. In medieval scholasticism, where beings are defined as *entia creatum*, it is the God, *ens perfectissimum*. Then, as soon as the relationship between creation and the creator is relaxed, and in modernity human reason makes itself predominant, the ground becomes the self-certain subject. Beings are interpreted as objects whose objectivity is constituted in the subject and become thinkable in calculative thought.

For Heidegger, all Western thought after Plato is metaphysics. Metaphysics is the way of thinking which looks beyond beings toward their ground.¹³² The main metaphysical question is how beings must *be*, so that they can be known, handled and worked upon. Metaphysics inquires about the being of beings, but in such a way that being itself remains hidden from it. The gradual forgetfulness of being and with it the oblivion of the distinction between being and beings follow.¹³³ Being is interpreted as a being. Plato’s answer to the question of being is ἰδέα, Aristotele’s is ἐνέργεια, whereas Descartes’ is objectivity, and Nietzsche’s is will to power. At the very end of Western civilization, the wonder and attitude of openness to being which characterize primordial thought and begin this civilization are replaced by a utilizing and manipulative attitude. The attitude is characterized by the will to power, dominance, and conquest. In the world dominated by this attitude, there is no place for a thought about the meaning of being.

Man has already begun to overwhelm the entire earth and its atmosphere, to arrogate to himself in forms of energy the concealed powers of nature, and to submit future history to designing and implementing the world government. This same rebellious man is utterly at a loss when he has simply to say what *is*, or to say, *what this is*—that a thing *is*.¹³⁴

The primordial thinkers experience beings as what is present in presencing. Their thought is not yet metaphysics. They ask the question of the being of beings, but in such a way that being itself is revealed. To be a being means for them to emerge, to come forth into unconcealment, to appear by coming out, to be present. The fundamental revelation of being as presencing in unconcealment that underlies the early Greek thought is the beginning which brings about the essential history of Western humankind. According to Heidegger, “only a thinking which has beforehand thought being in the sense of presencing in unconcealment can think the presencing of what is present as ἰδέα.”¹³⁵ Being as presencing in the early Greeks thus prepares the way for Plato and Aristotle. In Plato the being of beings is thought as ἰδέα; in Aristotle as ἐνέργεια. The worst comes when ἐνέργεια is translated to *actualitas*.

¹³² See note 70.

¹³³ See Martin HEIDEGGER, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1958), pp. 14-15.

¹³⁴ SA, p. 343.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 342.

The Greek is shut away and to the present day it appears only in its Roman coining. *Actualitas* becomes reality (*Wirklichkeit*). Reality becomes objectivity (*Objektivität*). But objectivity must still preserve the character of presencing (*Anwesen*) in order to remain in its essence of that-which-stands-against (*Gegenständlichkeit*). It is the presence (*Präsenz*) of representational thinking. The decisive turn in the destiny of being as ἐνέργεια lies in the transition to *actualitas*.¹³⁶

In Heidegger's view, our fate depends upon the understanding of the meaning of being which the Greeks once had, and which can be revealed in the thoughtful translation of the words εἶναι, εἶναι, which are usually translated as "being," "beings," and "to be."¹³⁷ To the Presocratics these words say "presencing in unconcealment" („Anwesen in die Unverborgenheit”).¹³⁸ The fundamental meaning of being for them is presencing (*Anwesen*). Presencing is not a mere presence. Being as presencing means enduring in unconcealment, dis-closing. "Presencing is disclosing self-concealing."¹³⁹ The primordial thinking of the early Greeks is thus for Heidegger not just the intellectual activity that stands for the beginning of rational Europe, but a focusing on self-disclosing being which it brings forth in language. The fundamental words of early Greek thinking, such as φύσις, λόγος, ἀλήθεια, ἄπειρον, ἀρχή, and χρεών are all for him the names of being which express its different characteristics. None of them, however, can reveal being fully. There is an essential withdrawal of being. Even in a direct, unmediated contact, being does not dis-close itself fully to us, but always only in part. The revelations of being as ἰδέα and ἐνέργεια show being no longer as being, but as a being. Being is further concealed in *actualitas* and objectivity. The history of being is thus the history of its gradual concealment and oblivion. The distinction between being and beings remains finally forgotten. "Presencing unnoticeably becomes something present".¹⁴⁰ Being is replaced by a certain being: the ground of metaphysics. It is no longer understood as presencing, but as a presence. Still, the question remains: Why has this happened? Why have being and the distinction between being and beings been forgotten?

The answer to this question can also be found in "The Anaximander Fragment". Heidegger says:

What is present is what presently or not presences in unconcealment. Along with the ἀλήθεια, which belongs to the essence of being, the λήθη remains entirely unthought. ...¹⁴¹

The great achievement of the Greeks is, according to Heidegger, that they initiate inquiry into beings as such as a whole and experience presencing in unconcealment as their basic character.¹⁴² Beings are for them what is present in presencing. However, they do not inquire into the nature of presencing itself. The world opens up to them magically and they adhere to the unfolding of that opening. Yet, they do not notice that paradoxically there is a concealment (λήθη) in unconcealment (ἀλήθεια). They do not discover that whatever discloses itself to us, reveals itself only in part, for it conceals something else that can be revealed. This is the fundamental discovery that

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 307. Both εἶναι and εἶναι are substantives derived from εἶμι (*I am*), εἶναι (*to be*).

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 341.

¹³⁹ See Martin HEIDEGGER, „Aletheia", in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Stuttgart: Neske, 1954), p. 285; "Aletheia", in *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁰ SA, p. 335.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 341.

¹⁴² See *Grundfragen der Philosophie*, pp. 128-137.

leads Heidegger to the question of the essence of truth and his “turn”: there is *concealment in unconcealment*. “As it discloses itself in beings, being withdraws”—the sentence which Heidegger repeats twice in his 1946 essay is an expression of this discovery. Being is an ambiguous disclosing process. It dis-closes itself to us in beings always only in part. The oblivion of being occurs when this partial revelation of being is taken as a whole; when being is identified with its particular disclosure, with a being which is named *ἰδέα*, *ἐνέργεια*, *actualitas*, objectivity, the Hegelian absolute concept, or the Nietzschean will to power. The task for thinking which Heidegger sets before himself in his later works, including “The Anaximander Fragment,” is precisely to think the unthought *λήθη* in *ἀλήθεια*. It is to trace the essential history of Western humankind, the history of being’s oblivion, from its original beginning in the early Greek revelation of being as presencing. Finally, it is to repeat this beginning more originally in its originality, so as to bring about a new beginning.

CONCLUSION

Heidegger’s reading of Anaximander has been neglected and largely misunderstood by the Heideggerian commentators. In the vast secondary literature on Heidegger, I have not found any works which comment on his 1926 and 1941 lectures. Among the few authors who discuss his 1946 essay, no one adequately places Heidegger’s interpretation within the context of his history of being. “The Anaximander Fragment” is studied in reference to either the problem of justice, or the question of metaphysics, or Derrida’s post-modernist creative mis-reading of the text.¹⁴³ Yet, although unsystematic and obscure, and thus giving a possibility for a plurality of readings, Heidegger’s interpretation of Anaximander from both his 1941 lecture and 1946 essay is truly important for understanding of his later work. It can be made fully explicit only in reference to his original philosophy of history—the history of being—which he develops in his later writings.

For the later Heidegger, the Anaximander fragment is about being and only about being. If Heidegger’s 1926 lecture on Anaximander still resembles traditional Presocratic scholarship, his 1941 lecture and 1946 essay are a radical departure from it. Heidegger’s work is neither a mere antiquarian, scholarly study of early Greek thinking nor an affirmation of the long lost Greek way of life. We “cross-over” to the Greek thinking not for the advancement of scholarship, but rather to uncover the

¹⁴³ There are only a few articles in which Heidegger’s reading of Anaximander is discussed. Of the more recent ones, worth mentioned are the following. Robert BERNASCONI, “Justice and the Twilight Zone of Morality”, in *Reading Heidegger*, ed. by John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Karin DE BOER, “Giving Due: Heidegger’s Interpretation of the Anaximander Fragment”, in *Research in Phenomenology*, 27 (1997), pp. 150-166. Françoise DASTUR, “Heidegger on Anaximander: Being and Justice”, in *Interrogating the Tradition: Hermeneutics and the History of Philosophy*, eds. Charles E. Scott and John Sallis (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000). Kenneth MALY, “Reading and Thinking: Heidegger and the Hinting Greeks”, in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, ed. by Christopher Macann, 2 (London, Routledge, 1992). Charles E. Scott, “‘Αδίκη and Catastrophe: Heidegger’s ‘Anaximander Fragment’”, in *Heidegger Studies* 10 (1994), pp. 127-142. The essay: “Anaximander: A Founding Name in History,” by Michel Serres, which has recently been published in the collection entitled *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, ed. by David C. Jacobs (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1999) does not strangely contain any reference to Heidegger at all.

Jacques Derrida discusses Heidegger’s “The Anaximander Fragment”, in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minut, 1972). See John Protevi, “Avoiding A ‘Superficial Reading’: Derrida’s Reading of the Anaximander Fragment”, in *Philosophy Today* 38,1 (Spring 1994), pp. 88-97.

original experience of beings in their phenomenality, what is present in presencing, that stands at the beginning of Western thought, and to bring about the departure of a new destiny of being.¹⁴⁴ The new destiny comes about with a new understanding of the meaning of being, but the new for Heidegger is really a thoughtful repetition of the old which had once been thought by Anaximander and was called by him τὸ χρεών.

The essence of being as τὸ Χρεών is “letting things be as they are” or “letting beings be.” Being gives itself, so to say, to beings. It is the handing over of presencing to what is present. But this “giving itself” or “handing over” does not merely describe being in its reference to individual beings in the phenomenal world, but to beings collectively in history. Being as τὸ Χρεών is then that which is before beings as such as a whole and grants them the possibility of historical manifestations as what is present, *ens creatum*, or objects. In this sense being is also Ἀρχή, the beginning, the ordering which orders beings into being. Further, as Ἄπειρον, being is in the manner of resisting all limits. It is none of its particular historical determinations or meanings—*substantia*, *actualitas*, objectivity, or the will to power. It is the unlimited, in contrast to beings that, in their historical manifestations, are always within a limit (πέρας). Τὸ Χρεών, ἡ Ἀρχή, and τὸ Ἄπειρον are hence the same. They are all names for being. These basic words of Greek thinking are now capitalized because they are used no longer in Greek, but in a Heideggerian sense.¹⁴⁵ Their interpretation takes place in the “echo” of the Presocratics. It happens as the listening that opens itself out to the words of the Presocratics from our contemporary age, from the age of the world picture and representation—the age which is marked by the domination of technology and the oblivion of being. It is placed within the framework of Heidegger’s history of being.

By answering to the ordering of being in history, beings let order and mutual respect prevail. One epoch of being replaces another one. Only in that way can beings as such as a whole reveal themselves as subsequently what is present, *ens creatum*, objects. The fragment B1 of Anaximander translated by Heidegger reads:

»Die Verfügung für das jeweilig Anwesende ist die Verwehrung der Grenzen.«

»Von woheraus aber der Hervorgang ist dem jeweilig Anwesenden auch die Entgāngnis in dieses (als in das Selbe) geht hervor *entsprechend der nötigen Not; gehören nämlich lassen sie Fug somit auch Ruch eines dem anderen (im Verwinden) des Un-fugs* entsprechend der Zuweisung des Zeitigen durch die Zeit.«¹⁴⁶

Recalling Heidegger’s remark that a literal translation is not always faithful, I retranslate the Heideggerian translation as follows:

Being as the ordering of beings into being is unlimited in the sense that it refuses any possible limit, for it is not a being.

But from whence is the coming forth for each being, also into this (as into the same) the going away comes forth, *answering to the compelling need. For they let order belong, and thereby also respect, to one another (in getting over) of disorder*, answering to the assignment of what is timely in time.

¹⁴⁴ SA, p. 309.

¹⁴⁵ Heidegger is not always consistent in capitalizing basic words of Greek thinking, but in “The Anaximander Fragment” he begins with the capital letter the following words Χρεών, Λόγος, Ἐν, Μοῖρα, and Ἀλήθεια. See SA, pp. 310 and 339.

¹⁴⁶ B1 is the numbering according to Diels. Heidegger divides the fragment B1 into two parts, each of which has been put in quotation marks. His translation of the first part, which he calls “a shorter saying of Anaximander,” and of the second part, which is not put in italics, comes from *Grundbegriffe*. The rest of the translation (the italicized words) comes from “Der Spruch des Anaximander.”

In his 1946 essay, Heidegger concentrates his interpretation on the part of the fragment which he considers to be the original words of Anaximander. This part has been distinguished in italics. In the 1941 lecture he discusses the whole text. There he also says that being can be interpreted by way of time. This is reflected in his translation of the end of the fragment. Each being which is ordered into being realizes the when and the how-long which is assigned to it. It belongs to a certain epoch. This way, it answers to the assignment of what is timely in time and submits to the order of being.¹⁴⁷

As Heidegger himself acknowledges, his translation of the Anaximander fragment cannot be demonstrated solely by scholarly means.¹⁴⁸ The fragment will not reveal its meaning to us if we just explain it by using the apparatus of traditional philology or historiography. In order to make this fragment speak in the Heideggerian tongue, we must put it into the framework of his history of being, the epochal history which unveils in response to being as τὸ Χρεών, the *compelling need*. We must also consider it in the context of the present epoch of being, the epoch of being's oblivion and questionlessness, and open ourselves to think on being.

¹⁴⁷ Even in the 1941 lecture, Heidegger does not devote much attention to the very end of the Anaximander fragment, which reads: κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν. We learn from him that time (χρόνος) should not be taken here in its usual sense of a measure and a succession of now-points (instances). It is rather time for something to happen. "Time is the allocation of what is present into its momentary presencing" (GB, p. 121). Still, one can feel a certain dissatisfaction at this point of Heidegger's presentation. In the 1946 essay there is no direct reference to time. However, as in the 1941 lecture, he speaks about a while which is assigned to each being. For example: "Τὸ Χρεών, usage, is the handing over of what is in each case present into its while in unconcealment" (SA, p. 340). For Heidegger, the being of beings is experienced by the Greeks as presencing, and presencing corresponds to lasting awhile (enduring) of each being. It can thus be interpreted by the way of time.

¹⁴⁸ SA, p. 343.

AIMS AND SCOPE

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